

How the Yiling Patriarch Became Everyone's Gay Awakening

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by [tinitin](#)

Summary

Everyone was familiar with the fact that Wei Wuxian was attractive. Despite being the son of a servant, he was marked fourth on the list of most eligible bachelors. Though he was talented and attractive, nobody knew the potential of his attractiveness until the Yiling Patriarch appeared in their classroom.

(Wherein the Yiling Patriarch somehow gets sent back in time, and everyone realizes that they might be gay.)

[Spanish Translation](#)

Notes

Please enjoy reading

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Chapter 1

It had been an irrefutable fact that Wei Wuxian was attractive. Despite being born a servant's son with no true status, he managed to snag fourth on the list of eligible bachelors. Rumors state that the only person who was able to resist his charms was the second jade of Gusu Lan, Lan Wangji. However, Lan Wangji's resistance against Wei Wuxian was no surprise to anyone. After all, Lan Wangji was renowned for his strict personality.

Though Wei Wuxian was famous for his charming personality and flirtatious nature, the boy was still young. There were none that could deny the brilliance of his laughter, but his voice had yet to mature. Baby fat still clung to his cheeks, and his silver eyes still lack the sharpness of an adult's. Wei Wuxian was tall for his age, but people believed that he could grow taller.

People knew Wei Wuxian was attractive, but nobody knew the extent of Wei Wuxian's potential; in looks and in talent. That was the case, but one day Lan Qiren's room was enveloped in a thick curtain of smoke.

The students were caught off guard by the sudden appearance of this smoke. "WHAT THE —" Jiang Cheng yelled before entering a coughing fit. "Wei Wuxian! Is this your doing?!"

"Why is it always me?!" Wei Wuxian yelled back. Jiang Cheng always thought the worst of him, but it was understandable. It was always Jiang Cheng and Jiang Yanli who pulled him out of trouble, and considering Wei Wuxian's affinity for chaos, Jiang Cheng had to do so often. However, that didn't stop Wei Wuxian from feeling offended. "Do you think I would do this? Smoke could literally suffocate us!"

"Yes," Jiang Cheng said without hesitation.

"WEI WUXI—" A voice shouted, and Wei Wuxian recognized it to be Lan Qiren's. Before Lan Qiren could finish saying his name, a cough tore out of his lips. "THIS BETTER NOT BE YOUR DOING!"

The senior disciples of the Lan Clan, hearing the chaos, rushed to Lan Qiren's classroom. Many who were far from the man's classroom also rushed over after seeing the smoke dancing above the building. Using some cultivation tricks, they were able to get rid of a majority of the smoke pent up in the small classroom, but there was still enough smoke that people could barely see through.

Because of their lack of sight, everyone was startled when they heard a foreign voice. "Aiya. Wen Qing," the voice said. "Before you kill me, think of A-Yuan! My baby radish will avenge my death if you kill me! Then, you'll have to go against him. What will you do then?"

The smoke suddenly dissipated, and the cultivators had a clear view of the intruder. A man who wore robes of black and red stood in the center of the classroom.

Everyone had thought that once the smoke was gone, everything would calm down. However, contrary to their expectations, the class was thrown deeper into chaos after the appearance of the unexpected guest. People were screaming, and swords were unsheathed. Whoever this man was, he was powerful. Even the strongest cultivators couldn't enter the Cloud Recesses undetected, but this man entered effortlessly. Among the yells, there were people demanding to know the man's identity.

"Eh...?" He said, his expression morphing into one of surprise. He raised a hand. The senior cultivators were expecting for the man to initiate a powerful attack, so they raised their swords higher and entered their fighting stances. Some of the students began to crawl under their desks in preparation for the upcoming attack.

They waited for a few seconds, still wary of the presence of this intruder.

However, no attack came. Instead, the man only raised his hand to scrape the side of his nose. "This isn't the Demon Slaughtering Cave..." He said.

Demon Slaughtering Cave? This man had thought he was somewhere called the Demon Slaughtering Cave, so the possibility that he exorcised demons were high. Perhaps this man was an immortal! If the man were an immortal, it would explain how he seamlessly entered the Cloud Recesses undetected. However, even an immortal must be subjected to the courtesy rules.

"Who are you?" Lan Qiren inquired, sword still raised.

"Huh?" The man's eyes widened when they locked onto Lan Qiren. "Ah!" The man began to laugh nervously. Though the tension of the room was still high, it was considerably lower than before. Some of the braver individuals noticed how vibrant the man's voice sounded. "Old Man Qiren."

The classroom went silent before one person bursted out in laughter. Wei Wuxian was clutching his stomach as he slammed his table with a single open hand. In any other situation, Lan Qiren would have demanded that he leave, but the man was too flabbergasted.

"Old Man Qiren?!" Lan Qiren sputtered, and Wei Wuxian laughed harder.

The man wearing robes of night and fire turned to the sound of Wei Wuxian's laughter. Many feared that the man grew irritated with the boy's laughter and would kill him, so multiple cultivators were preparing to attack him. However, the man only stared at Wei Wuxian.

Jiang Cheng was Wei Wuxian's brother. Though people refused to acknowledge that fact due to their different birth statuses, nobody could deny that the boys grew up tied to the hip. Because they had grown up so closely together, of course it would be Jiang Cheng who would notice something odd about the man's appearance. Something familiar to him.

Jiang Cheng's eyes opened wider as he realized why this man's appearance seemed so familiar to him. "Wei Wuxian?" He whispered.

"Jiang Cheng?" The man said, astonishment clear in his expression.

After their exchange, everybody in the classroom was able to connect the dots. Heads began to move. The gazes of people landed on the older Wei Wuxian, then moved to the younger Wei Wuxian. This cycle continued for a while before the entire class began yelling.

To say that Lan Qiren's class was hell was an understandable comparison before older Wei Wuxian's appearance. At the moment, the shocked screams of the class could possibly cause the loudest of demons to scamper in fear.

At first, the appearance of Wei Wuxian from the future caused people to desperately search for solutions to send him back; many fearing the potential that the situation could cause a rift in time and space.

When a week passed and nothing happened, their desperation naturally subsided, and the presence of Wei Wuxian's future self became somewhat normal. Because people couldn't refer to the man as Wei Wuxian or Wei Ying due to the presence of the man's younger self, they decided to call him by his title—the Yiling Patriarch.

Everyone was familiar with Wei Wuxian's carefree personality. With his current angel-like face, it was easy to become charmed by him. In fact, his charm may be more potent than a fox demon's seduction. However, the Yiling Patriarch didn't have a sweet face with a hint of mischief like Wei Wuxian did. Instead, he had a face that rivalled with immortals.

Currently, a crowd of young disciples were surrounding the Yiling Patriarch. Hearing something a youth said, the Yiling Patriarch promptly giggled, and the group joined in with his laughter.

Wei Wuxian, Jiang Cheng, and Nie Huaisang were away from the group, sitting on a branch hanging above the calm water of the Cloud Recesses. Wei Wuxian sat between the two while Jiang Cheng sat closer to the trunk.

"I'm going to become really handsome when I'm older!" Wei Wuxian declared as he stared at the group surrounding his future self. "And popular!" He decided to add, voice obviously in awe.

Jiang Cheng gagged. "I think you became uglier, Wei Wuxian."

"You're just jealous!"

"I'm really not," Jiang Cheng scoffed. He gestured to the Yiling Patriarch with his thumb. "What's there to be jealous of when you look like that?"

"Are you going to act that way when it comes to women?" Wei Wuxian asked, nudging Jiang Cheng who decided to gripped the bark underneath his palm to keep himself steady. "You'll get blacklisted if you treat them like you treat me."

“I won’t!”

“Will!” Wei Wuxian realizes he hadn’t heard a peep from Nie Huaisang for a while. He turns toward the direction where Nie Huaisang was sitting; besides him. Nie Huaisang appeared to be stuck in a dazed trance, his gaze fixed on the group surrounding the Yiling Patriarch. Feeling slightly worried, Wei Wuxian called out to him. “Nie-Xioooooong? Wei Wuxian to Nie Huaisang. Hello?”

Nie Huaisang was struck out of his stupor. “Ah. Yes, Wei-Xiong?”

“What were you thinking about while staring at them?” Wei Wuxian tilts his head toward the group.

“You know how I am, Wei-Xiong. I like admiring beauty.” The response slipped out of his lips easily, and Jiang Cheng and Wei Wuxian were struck silent. The Cloud Recesses were certainly beautiful—neither of the boys would disagree with that statement. Thinking that Nie Huaisang was referring to the gorgeous scenery, they commented.

“I suppose Gusu does have many beautiful things,” Jiang Cheng said, moving his head to look around.

Wei Wuxian laughs. “Yeah, like Lan Zhan!”

Jiang Cheng snaps his head toward his brother. “Like Lan Wangji? If someone hears you say that, they’ll accuse you of being a cut-sleeve!”

Wei Wuxian pouts. “I’m just stating the obvious, Jiang Cheng. Lan Zhan is a very beautiful person.”

Jiang Cheng groans and punches Wei Wuxian’s shoulder which causes Wei Wuxian to sway slightly. “You’re always saying ‘Lan Zhan’ this, ‘Lan Zhan’ that. If I didn’t know better, I’d say you have a crush on him.”

“Lan Zhan is such a boring person!”

“Then stop messing with Lan Wangji!”

“But I don’t want to, Jiang Cheng.” Wei Wuxian grins at his brother. “He has such funny reactions! Everyone says that he’s the Second Jade of Gusu; a perfect young master, but in reality, he’s so short tempered!”

“That’s because you’re purposefully messing with him.”

“So?”

“So it’s completely different!” Jiang Cheng takes his hand and drags it down his face. “Forget it. If Lan Wangji kills you, I’m not making you a grave.”

Wei Wuxian slings his arm around Jiang Cheng’s shoulders, the motion causing the branch the boys were sitting on to shake. Nie Huaisang yelps at the sudden movement. “Who asked

you to build me a grave?”

Jiang Cheng retaliates by trying to pull Wei Wuxian’s hand off his shoulders, but Wei Wuxian’s arm stubbornly clings on. “So you don’t want one? Completely fine by me. Why would I spend money on your grave when I could use it to buy food or gifts for A-Jie?”

The branch they were sitting on had a wide girth, but even the bulky branch had its limits. Jiang Cheng and Wei Wuxian’s roughhousing caused the branch to jerk immensely. “Uh, Jiang-Xiong, Wei-Xiong.” Nie Huaisang was having trouble staying steady on the moving branch.

One sudden jerk caused Nie Huaisang to lose his hold on the branch. With a yelp, he fell backwards into freezing cold water.

The bodies of water in Gusu Lan were far from the depth of Yunmeng’s water, but they were still quite deep. Nie Huaisang, being born as a Nie, had limited knowledge on how to swim due to the fact that the Nies lived on mountains. When he fell in the water, all of his knowledge went out the window, and he was left desperately trying to keep his head above the water’s surface.

Seeing their friend in trouble, Wei Wuxian and Jiang Cheng were prepared to jump into the water, but before they could, a figure dressed in black went after Nie Huaisang.

The Yiling Patriarch brought Nie Huaisang to the shallower parts of the pool, and Nie Huaisang was left panting. When Nie Huaisang opened his eyes, a beautiful image met his sight.

The Yiling Patriarch was drenched.

Nie Huaisang was admiring his best friend’s future self earlier, but with the man’s dark robes clinging onto his body, accentuating his surprisingly lean figure, and the sun shining behind him, Nie Huaisang could confidently say that the man was definitely one of the prettiest people he had ever seen.

The Yiling Patriarch smiled, his expression reminiscent of the warmth of sunlight on a chilly day. “You alright, Nie-Xiong?”

...

Nie Huaisang takes it back. The Yiling Patriarch is the prettiest person he’s ever seen. “Ah... Yes...” Nie Huaisang couldn’t say any more, fearing that something inappropriate might slip from his lips. Perhaps something along the lines of, *“Okay. So you’re really beautiful, so please stay with me forever and ever so I can paint you every day to preserve your otherworldly beauty.”*

Nie Huaisang was taken aback when he realized his heart felt like it was about to burst out of his chest. His internal reaction was simply *fuck*.

The Yiling Patriarch responded to Nie Huaisang's answer with a laugh, and Nie Huaisang wished he could trap it in a bottle. Nie Huaisang watches as the Yiling Patriarch sends a stern look to his past self and Jiang Cheng. "You two! Be careful when there are people around you. It's not just you two in this world!"

Both boys inched in on themselves. "Yessir," they responded. It was impressive that the Yiling Patriarch could control his past self considering how wild the boy was.

The Yiling Patriarch guided Nie Huaisang out of the water, and Nie Huaisang's eyes were caught on the way the Yiling Patriarch's muscles moved. The way his wet hair clung onto his body. Nie Huaisang couldn't ignore the man's low-cut robes, and the way water dripped down his skin, glistening in the sunlight.

"Uh, Nie-Xiong," the Yiling Patriarch said, sending Nie Huaisang out of his trance. The man gestured to the side of his lip, and Nie Huaisang realized he was drooling. However, Nie Huaisang wondered who could *not* drool when there's such a specimen in front of them!

"Oh... Haha," he said awkwardly, cursing at himself.

"It's so strange to see you quiet, Nie-Xiong!" The Yiling Patriarch took a look at himself and his wet clothes. "Aiya... If we stay in these clothes, we'll get sick." The man promptly... stripped.

Nie Huaisang's brain shut down.

"Hey!" Jiang Cheng shouted from the branch, sounding horrified. "What are you doing, Wei Wuxian?!" He screamed, looking at the Yiling Patriarch.

With his top robes gone revealing his perfect shoulders and the only thing stopping it from dropping all the way being the sash around his waist, the Yiling Patriarch responded simply, "Taking robes off." On his chest was... The Wen Sect's symbol.

The wound that was etched deeply into the man's chest was a stark contrast to his deathly pale skin. His skin lacked the luster his younger counterpart had which caused it to appear translucent. The Wen Sect's sun appeared to be burnt into the Yiling Patriarch's skin, and for a second, Nie Huaisang felt as if he couldn't breathe because of his shock. He look past the Yiling Patriarch to the boy who'll eventually become him.

Wei Wuxian appeared to have noticed the startling wound on the man's chest, too, if by any indication of his wide eyes. Feeling Nie Huaisang's eyes on him, the boy turned to meet his friend's gaze. They began a silent conversation. Through the action, their minds reached a single conclusion—an inquiry.

What happened?

However, Jiang Cheng's yelling struck Wei Wuxian out of his trance, and as a result, Nie Huaisang too.

“In front of all these people?!” Jiang Cheng shouted. Nie Huaisang almost forgot about the crowd of disciples. Looking at them, he wondered if they noticed too, but the sight that he was met with was disappointing to say the least.

The majority of his classmates were already drooling...

“Yeah?” The Yiling Patriarch tilted his head. Nie Huaisang's mind betrayed him and supplied that the Yiling Patriarch looked adorable. “I did it with Lan Zhan before.”

Jiang Cheng was shut silent at that revelation. Slowly, he turns his head toward his Wei Wuxian. With a slightly hushed voice, he said, “Did you?”

Wei Wuxian shrugged. “In the Cold Pond, Lan Zhan and I have seen each other naked.” Wei Wuxian’s discomfort was easy to see. “You and I have stripped in front of each other before. I don’t see why you’re making it such a big deal, Jiang Cheng.”

“But it’s *Lan Wangji* !” Jiang Cheng hissed.

“Yeah?”

The Yiling Patriarch saw no reason to stop, and he took his robes off. The black and red fabric of the outfit sat on the filthy ground, the water from it spreading onto the fertile lands of the Cloud Recesses. The only thing the Yiling Patriarch kept on were his trousers. He kneeled, his naughty fingers reaching for Nie Huaisang’s sash. Nie Huaisang promptly flinched away from his hand.

“I’m serious you know,” the Yiling Patriarch said. “You’ll get sick if you keep these on. If my own clothes weren’t wet, I’d give them to you.” The man took a quick glance at the soggy display his clothes made. “Unfortunately,” he sighed, “they’re wet. Not to mention with your low cultivation, you’ll get even sicker quicker.”

Nie Huaisang realized that the man had a point, but it didn’t stop his mind from constantly pointing out the man’s radiant silver eyes. Nie Huaisang held tightly to his robe and flinched away. “Uhm,” he said.

Suddenly, the Yiling Patriarch’s eyes lit up. “Oh, actually!” The Yiling Patriarch turned to the watching crowd of disciples. Nie Huaisang had always been observant, and when he saw the slight flush on their faces, he couldn’t unsee it. “Do any of you have clean paper for talismans and ink?”

One disciple came forward. “Here, Master Wei,” the disciple said, dropping off the two items the Yiling Patriarch ordered.

“I told you to stop calling me that. It makes me feel old.” The Yiling Patriarch feigned a pout.

“Master Wei doesn’t look old at all!” Young Master Ouyang told him confidently. For some reason, the Yiling Patriarch looked uncomfortable at the compliment, or more accurately, it seemed as if he wasn’t expecting such a comment to come from the boy. However, the Yiling Patriarch gave the boy a big smile.

“Thank you, Young Master Ouyang,” he said with a smile. “I hope I don’t. I’m still relatively young.”

“You look amazing, Master Wei,” another disciple commented.

“You bunch are really nice,” he laughed. He appeared to be unused to receiving compliments, and Nie Huaisang couldn’t help but wonder why. Currently, the boy who would eventually become this man already receives waves of compliments. The appearance of the Yiling Patriarch is even better, so how could he not receive comments on his looks?

The Yiling Patriarch placed the talisman down. Using the ink, he drew some symbols on the sheet of paper. The design was simple, but it was nothing that anyone had ever seen. The Yiling Patriarch beckoned for Nie Huaisang to come closer, and the boy followed. As the talisman was stuck onto Nie Huaisang’s robes, the boy felt a sudden gust of wind envelop his figure, and then he was dry.

“Wow,” escaped Nie Huaisang’s mouth. “Who created that talisman?”

“I did,” the Yiling Patriarch said.

“... Excuse me,” Nie Huaisang said, gawking.

“I did,” the Yiling Patriarch repeated. “Just now. You saw it yourself, Nie-Xiong. It’s not a complicated talisman.”

“True, but even the simplest talismans take at least a few days to come up with...”

The Yiling Patriarch laughed. “What can I tell you, Nie-Xiong? Didn’t you know I’m a genius?”

Nie Huaisang couldn’t argue against that.

“Amazing, Master Wei!” A disciple shouted.

“You’re such a genius!” Another said, and a small flush appeared on the Yiling Patriarch’s face.

“Seriously. What’s up with you all?” The Yiling Patriarch took a finger and rubbed the side of his nose. It was a gesture all the disciples were familiar with since Wei Wuxian often did the same thing. The Yiling Patriarch looked down, and a vibrant laugh fell from his lips. “Ah—I should probably dry my own robes too!” Turning around and walking over to the red and black mess on the grass, the Yiling Patriarch drew another talisman.

The muscles of his back contracted each time the man moved. The motion of those muscles were so elegant. Nie Huaisang couldn’t help but swallow as he saw drips of water crawl down skin more flawless than jade.

A burst of air erupted from where the Yiling Patriarch placed the talisman on his clothes. His long hair flew back, and Nie Huaisang felt as though time was going in slow motion. The Yiling Patriarch’s mane elegantly licked at the air behind him.

“There we go! All dry!” He declared. The Yiling Patriarch turned to Nie Huaisang’s direction, and Nie Huaisang was blessed to see the process of the Yiling Patriarch put on his clothes. How such a visually pleasing human could exist was incomprehensible to Nie Huaisang, but he couldn’t stop his eyes from occasionally taking glances at the wound marring the man’s chest. Little did he know that the disciples who decided to study at the Cloud Recesses were thinking the exact same thing minus Nie Huaisang’s acute observation.

The consensus view of the Yiling Patriarch was that he was kind and funny, not to mention incredibly attractive. All of the disciples thought that it wasn’t strange that they’d love to come home to such a person waiting for them, full of bright smiles and cheerful laughter. It was understandable, was it not? That they all yearn to have him welcome them home everyday.

Nie Huaisang, as much as he loved watching the motion of the Yiling Patriarch’s muscles, reached for the back of his sash. Fumbling around for a bit, he finally found what he wanted, “Here, Master Wei.”

In his outstretched hand laid a fan.

“Eh,” the Yiling Patriarch said. “Nie-Xiong... Isn’t that your favorite fan?”

Nie Huaisang scratched the back of his head. Quite nervously, he said, “Uhm... Yes.” He was quick to add, “But you saved my life, so I have to give you something!”

“Nie-Xiong, in the future, you don’t even let me get in a three feet radius of that thing. What’s different now—”

Nie Huaisang thrust the fan into the Yiling Patriarch’s hands. “Oh, look! A bird! Well, I have to go, bye.”

“Eh. Nie-Xio—” Nie Huaisang was quick to escape from the scene, leaving his precious fan in the Yiling Patriarch’s grip.

The man must admit that the fan was beautiful. Intricate designs were inserted carefully into the fabric. However, the Yiling Patriarch couldn’t help but feel that it was strange that Nie Huaisang would give him his prized fan. The Yiling Patriarch opened it, his mouth gaping in awe of the fan’s craftsmanship.

The group of disciples at the scene couldn’t help but think that the Yiling Patriarch looked like an immortal that had descended from heaven. The beautiful fan in the man’s grip contrasted drastically from his outfit, but it was no less aesthetically pleasing to look at.

That day, Nie Huaisang and the disciples thought that they would be fine having such a beautiful person around the Cloud Recesses.

Lan Wangji passed by the group with his brother.

"Wangji," Lan Xichen said, "do you, perhaps, want to join them?"

"..."

"Okay. Don't look so angry little brother."

It took them a couple of weeks for them to realize that they would not be fine.

Encouraged by Nie Huaisang's gift to the Yiling Patriarch, people began to give small presents to the Yiling Patriarch. The man would always give the person who gave him a gift a bright smile. "Ah, thank you!" He would say. If a person were lucky, the Yiling Patriarch would give them a lively laugh.

Others, feeling as if they have lost somehow, began to give the Yiling Patriarch more gifts—larger gifts, or pricier gifts. In a matter of days, the Yiling Patriarch's temporary room became flooded with presents.

A knock resounded in Jiang Cheng and Wei Wuxian's room. The two boys sat up from their respective beds and looked at each other.

"Did you invite Nie-Xiong?" Jiang Cheng asked his brother.

"I was about to ask you the same thing," Wei Wuxian replied. "Did you invite anyone?"

"If anyone's going to invite people, it would be you." Jiang Cheng climbed off his bed, and walked to their door. Opening it, the two boys were met with the image of Wei Wuxian's future self holding what appears to be a variety of different items.

"Jiang Cheng!" The Yiling Patriarch cheered, Jiang Cheng groaned. Now he had two Wei Wuxians to deal with, and he was *not* pleased.

"Oh God! It's you."

"Me!"

"What do you want, Yiling Patriarch?" Jiang Cheng truly wondered what brought the man to the front of their room. However, he had a feeling that those items had something to do with it.

"Everyone's way nicer than I remembered when I was your age," he said. "It probably has to do with the fact that I'm a time traveller that doesn't even know how they got back in time, but everyone's been giving me presents. I have so many that I can't even walk around in my room without stepping on something."

Wei Wuxian let out an indignant whine. "Whaaat? They give you presents? The only presents I get are from girls. Guys never give me any!"

"I know right?" The Yiling Patriarch replied to the boy before talking to the younger version of his brother. "So can I leave some here?"

Jiang Cheng stayed silent for a while. "... Don't you live by yourself?"

"Yeah?"

"And you live in one of Gusu Lan's largest buildings at the moment?"

"Well the place is way more comfier than the Demon Slaughtering Cave." Jiang Cheng isn't even surprised by the fact that his brother's atrocious naming sense didn't go away. Though the fact that his brother would live like a barbarian in the future bothered him, it wasn't the main thing in his mind at that moment.

"And you're telling me that your building has no space left whatsoever..."

"Yep!" The Yiling Patriarch already began dragging some of the items into their room.

"Great, now you've made me curious!" Wei Wuxian said. "Show us!"

Wei Wuxian always caused mischief, so it was no surprise that the Yiling Patriarch knew his way around the Cloud Recesses. Wei Wuxian had a lot of time to explore the grounds during his moments of terror after all. As they walked toward the building, people passing paused to greet the Yiling Patriarch despite how busy many of them appeared to be. Some carrying mountains of books in their hands.

The first thing Jiang Cheng noticed arriving at the building was the assortment of items littering the front of the structure. At first, he thought that it was the Yiling Patriarch being lazy and not taking the things inside his abode, but a whine from the man indicated otherwise.

"Even more?" He whined.

"More?" Jiang Cheng inquired. The walk from their room to the Yiling Patriarch's temporary building wasn't long. Perhaps the man had stopped somewhere on the way to their place.

"Yeah. I leave for a few minutes and there's already more things on the porch!"

"Wait, so you didn't stop on the way to our room?" Wei Wuxian asked, and the Yiling Patriarch gave his younger self a deadpan expression.

"Look at my arms!" The man said, rolling up his sleeves. He grabbed Wei Wuxian's arm, and to Jiang Cheng's astonishment, the Yiling Patriarch's arms were skinnier than his younger self's despite being taller. "How could I waste time when I'm carrying that much stuff with my weak body?"

"Wei Wuxian," he exclaimed, referring to the Yiling Patriarch, "why are you so skinny?! Are you not eating well in the future? What does my future self have to say about this?"

Apparently realizing something, the Yiling Patriarch chuckled awkwardly and rolled his sleeves down. "Let's just say we aren't on best terms right now in the future..." Jiang Cheng couldn't think of anything that would make him completely ignore Wei Wuxian's health. The

man was his best friend—his brother. Despite how annoying he could be, Jiang Cheng always cared. “There isn’t a lot of food where I’m staying…”

“And where are you staying in the future?” Jiang Cheng asked, worried. He took a quick concerned glance at his Wei Wuxian.

“Baby brother is worried for me?” The Yiling Patriarch teased.

Jiang Cheng flushed slightly. “Shut up! As if anyone’s worried about you! I’m just curious.”

“Totally worried,” the Yiling Patriarch grinned. “Anyway, don’t worry about it~”

The Yiling Patriarch slid the doors wide open, and a couple of presents already began to tumble out. Looking at the room, the Yunmeng duo was flabbergasted.

“Wow…” Wei Wuxian’s eyes were wide open in awe. “You really weren’t bullshitting. How much stuff is even in there?”

“I don’t know!” The Yiling Patriarch began to attempt to walk into the building, each step causing more items to fall out of the doorway. Jiang Cheng and Wei Wuxian followed suit.

Looking around, Jiang Cheng’s eyes fell on one thing. “What the hell is *THAT*?!”

The Yiling Patriarch followed his eyes. “Clothes?” The Yiling Patriarch scratched the side of his nose. “A Lan disciple gave it to me. He introduced himself to me, but I forgot his name. Kind of looked like a bad imitation of Lan Zhan.”

“Aren’t those courtesan robes?!” Jiang Cheng was angry. Who would dare give the Yiling Patriarch such a shameless gift?! Once he finds him, he’ll feed them to the dogs on the streets.

“Oh… Are they?” The Yiling Patriarch seemed to be unaware of that fact and picked the outfit up. In the Yiling Patriarch’s eyes, the only difference these clothes had from others was its lighter material and a slit on its side. It was also a bright red.

“Jiang Cheng, are you sure?” Wei Wuxian asked. “I mean, it’s only a brighter red and there’s a slit on its side.”

“Yeah,” the Yiling Patriarch agreed.

“You idiots!” Jiang Cheng yelled. “Give me that!” He stormed out of the room, almost tripping on some of the gifts. When Jiang Cheng was out of sight, Wei Wuxian and the Yiling Patriarch began to smell something burning, and the shocked shouting of foreign voices resounded throughout the room.

Jiang Cheng came back with a bit of ash on his cheeks. “Uhm… Jiang Cheng,” the Yiling Patriarch said pointing to his own cheek, and Jiang Cheng responded by rubbing his face with his sleeve. The ash was wiped away, revealing Jiang Cheng's clear skin underneath.

“Have any more gifts like that?” Jiang Cheng inquired.

“What did you do with it?” Wei Wuxian asked.

“You don’t need to know,” came Jiang Cheng’s vague response. The Lan disciples outside were running and shouting. Some smoke entered the Yiling Patriarch’s room causing the man to cough slightly.

“I have quite a few.” The Yiling Patriarch guided them to a different room, and Wei Wuxian had trouble not trampling over the gifts. However, Jiang Cheng stomped on as much as he could, harshly.

“How do you even get around?!” Wei Wuxian asked, stepping on the eighth gift.

“I had to give some to Nie-Xiong, but he told me that I should find someone else because I gave him too many. I was going to go to Lan Zhan, but then I realized that Jiang Cheng could help too.”

In the new room, there were even more items. Primarily, however, they were outfits.

Jiang Cheng found some of them pleasant. Others, Jiang Cheng took. He planned to burn them once he got out. If he gets kicked out of the Cloud Recesses for this, so be it! Like hell would he let his brother even *think* about wearing some of these clothes, no matter if it was the Wei Wuxian of the present or the future!

Jiang Cheng stopped grabbing at the shameless clothes. “How do they even know your size?”

The Yiling Patriarch just shrugged.

... *This is borderline obsessive behavior!* Jiang Cheng thought. Suddenly, something occurred to him. Could these possibly be... Courting gifts? “Stop accepting gifts,” Jiang Cheng demanded.

Wei Wuxian laughed. This was *no* laughing manner! “Jiang Cheng,” he smirked, “are you jealous of the future me?”

“No!” Jiang Cheng shouted. “Just stop accepting these!”

The two Wei Wuxians gave each other a knowing smile, and Jiang Cheng didn’t like it. “He’s jealous~” The Yiling Patriarch decided.

“I’M NOT!”

Many of the students in the Cloud Recesses have already spent a fortune on the Yiling Patriarch. Some may even call it an addiction. How could they resist the temptation of giving the man gifts when the smile they receive in return puts the sun to shame?

Twirling a peculiar black flute between his fingers, the Yiling Patriarch was wearing one of the robes gifted to him by one of the disciples and eating snacks that were given to him by some disciples. Lan Qiren gritted out, “Yiling Patriarch... I must ask you to *leave* .”

The man almost spat out his food. *Leave* ? What exactly had he done? He could only respond by sitting up, the flute in his hand settling in his enclosed fist.

It was against the rules to eat inside the classrooms, but currently, he was sitting outside. There had been a time where he would celebrate being kicked out, but now, he only wanted to experience nostalgia. Despite being respectful of the Lan Sect’s rules for once, he was still kicked out!

“Hey!” The Yiling Patriarch yelled after he swallowed his food. “Why should I leave? I haven’t done anything wrong! I won’t leave unless you give me a reason, Old Goat La-ah-ah—I mean Teacher Lan!”

Without supplying the Yiling Patriarch with a reason, Lan Qiren repeated, “Please *leave* !”

The Yiling Patriarch shook his head. “That’s not a reason, Teacher Lan!” Lan Qiren stood up from his seat and did something the Yiling Patriarch had not anticipated.

A loud bang resounded in the Lan Sect, and the Yiling Patriarch’s whine followed afterwards. The classroom’s door was shut in his face!

“Hey!” The Yiling Patriarch yelled. “Teacher Lan!” The Yiling Patriarch harrumphed, and he decided that if Lan Qiren didn’t want him to stay, then he wouldn’t. The Yiling Patriarch heard what suspiciously sounded like whining from the other side of the door, but it was unclear what exactly the disciples were whining about.

The only thing the Yiling Patriarch could do now is waddle around the Cloud Recesses. There were many people there who would appreciate his company. Suddenly, a bright idea struck him. Looking down at the familiar flute of black bamboo wood in his hand, the Yiling Patriarch smirked.

Perhaps he should pay the Wen Sect a quick visit.

Unbeknownst to him, Lan Qiren was scolding the disciples. “Do you know what shame is?!” Lan Qiren bellowed. “How shameful for the lot of you to be gawking at the Yiling Patriarch!”

The class responded to his reaction loudly, many voices trying to justify themselves. Lan Qiren, furious, only said, “Shut up!”

“I’m an advocate of the arts!” One disciple yelled out. *“His beauty isn’t something that can be ignored!”*

“I don’t care what you do outside my class,” Lan Qiren loudly declared. “However, considering that you’re here, I suggest you listen.”

“The Yiling Patriarch is incredibly attractive, isn’t he?”

“He really is! More beautiful than any girl I’ve seen!”

“Silence!” Lan Qiren yelled again.

“Am I odd for wanting to hold hands with him...?” A single disciple asked, and his question sparked a discussion amongst the students.

“I thought I was odd too!”

“I want to hug him!”

“I want to kiss his cheek!” A Nie disciple declared, smushing his own cheeks for emphasis.
“They look so soft!”

“Is it strange how much I love to give him gifts?” Another disciple said. Many eyes turned to the boy.

“NO!” The single word resonated throughout the classroom.

“I love giving him presents!”

“The man seems so happy when he gets them.”

“Right? That smile makes spending my allowance on him completely worth it, and I’d do it again!”

“Is it odd that... I want to marry him?”

The class went silent at that inquiry.

“When I think about it,” one boy said, *“I love his smile... His laugh... The crescents his eyes become when he’s happy...”*

“I do too,” someone commented.

A realization struck them.

“Oh shit... Does this mean I’m a cut-sleeve?”

“If that’s the case, then me too.”

A Jin disciple chuckled loudly. *“Idiots! You’re only like that because he’s more attractive than a woman. We aren’t cut-sleeves!”*

“I don’t know...” A young boy said, looking slightly traumatized. *“I would cut my sleeves for him...”*

“Again! Only because he’s more beautiful than women!” The same Jin disciple scoffed.

“I want to be the one to marry him then!” A disciple from a minor sect declared.

“No. I will!”

“No! Me!”

“I will fight for the courtship of the Yiling Patriarch!” A particularly haughty disciple said, taking out his sword. Following his example, those passionate for the Yiling Patriarch took out their swords as well.

“Hey, everyone,” Nie Huaisang said meekly. “Let’s think about this rationally…”

One young man raised his sword and yelled, *“LOVE DOESN’T WAIT FOR RATIONALITY!!!!”*

“AGREED!”

“CHAAAARGE!!!!”

The classroom was thrown into a storm of chaos. Swords clashed and flew into the air. Such a situation would be fine if the disciples were on open grounds. However, currently, they were in Lan Qiren’s classroom.

Lan Qiren was furious. Trust Wei Wuxian, no matter the point in time, to bring chaos. “WEI WUXIAN!!!!” He yelled in his fury.

“Ah?” The young boy questioned. “What did I do now?”

“No matter when, no matter where, you always manage to throw things into a disarray!”

“Huh? It’s not like I do it on purpose, Teacher Lan!” There were many things that Wei Wuxian does on purpose, but there were also many things that he doesn’t. For example, the situation occurring at the moment wasn’t his fault; it was the Yiling Patriarch’s. Although the Yiling Patriarch was technically still him, they were different entities.

“You—” Lan Qiren coughed up blood in frustration. “If you weren’t so troublesome, maybe this wouldn’t happen, Wei Ying! You’re just like your mother, Cangse Sanren!”

“Wait a minute.” A single voice broke through the clashing of swords, bringing everything to a halt. *“Won’t Wei Wuxian eventually become the Yiling Patriarch?”* Everyone’s eyes were on Wei Wuxian now. All the disciples scanned his perfect features and found the resemblance the boy had to his future self.

The disciples looked amongst themselves. They’ve never held any romantic attraction towards their classmate previously, but the arrival of the Yiling Patriarch changed things. Hungry eyes turned back Wei Wuxian’s way. “Aiya,” Wei Wuxian said, taking a step back. He felt his sweat dripping from his temple. “What’s that look on your faces? Hey! Guys, stop looking at me like I’m some sort of dish!”

“Young Master Wei,” a snarky disciple smirked. *“You’re a servant’s son aren’t you? How do you feel about marrying into my clan? I’m an heir, you know.”*

The disciple walked over to Wei Wuxian. Jiang Cheng saw the boy's hand reach out for his brother's wrist and promptly slapped it. "Watch your mouth," Jiang Cheng said. "Despite Wei Wuxian's parentage, he's still the senior disciple of the Jiang Sect." His eyes hardened. "Are you trying to look down on the Jiang Sect?"

The disciple backed off. He was shocked by the expression of the Jiang Sect Heir. However, another disciple stepped forward, a similar disgusting expression on his face. *"He doesn't mean harm, Young Master Jiang. It's just that your martial brother could probably do good if he married into an influential clan."*

Wei Wuxian laughed. "So you're saying your clans are influential? I'm sorry, but where did you come from again?"

"You—"

"Is the Yiling Patriarch so attractive that you can't keep it in your trousers?" Wei Wuxian continued, ignoring the glares directed at him and the numerous faces becoming red. Some from embarrassment; some in anger due to being exposed. "Now you're attacking poor innocent me!" Wei Wuxian twirled a strand of hair between his fingers in his mocked fluster.

Jiang Cheng gave him a look. "Innocent? You?"

"Shut up, Jiang Cheng." Wei Wuxian quickly jabbed his brother's shoulder. "Anyway, do you really want me in your life? You all know how annoying I can be, yet you're all still pining for me just because you all think I'll eventually become the Yiling Patriarch? You're all so stupid!" Wei Wuxian was struggling to contain his giggles. "I doubt that the Yiling Patriarch's future self came to visit him when he was my age!"

"You have a horrible memory though!" A boy pointed out, and Wei Wuxian promptly exploded in a fit of laughter.

"You actually think I'll forget something as crazy as this," he said, and the disciples finally realized that he had a point.

"Still! Your looks won't change!"

"Yeah!"

"Ah? Now you're going on about looks?" Wei Wuxian used a shocked expression. "I'm honestly worried about what the cultivation world will become in the future... And I wouldn't marry anyone! Unless..." He took a glance at Lan Wangji and grinned. Wei Wuxian pointed a single finger at Lan Wangji and shouted, "Unless they can beat Lan Zhan!"

Jiang Cheng smacked the back of Wei Wuxian's head. "You're using Lan Wangji in this situation?"

"Who can beat Lan Zhan?" Wei Wuxian retorted. "Besides me, no one would be able to!"

"Wei Ying!" Lan Wangji hissed.

Wei Wuxian turned his silver eyes to Lan Wangji and gave him a mischievous smirk. “It’s true Lan Zhan! Who’ll be able to defeat the perfect Second Jade of the Lan Clan?”

“Wei Ying!” Lan Qiren shouted. “Such a shameless thing to say!”

“That’s my middle name, Teacher Lan!” Wei Wuxian grinned.

Before the situation could escalate any further, someone loudly knocked on the classroom door. Knowing that the Yiling Patriarch wouldn’t have the patience to wait until the current moment to knock, Lan Wangji opened the door.

A disciple stood on the other side, panting roughly. “Wen clan...” The man panted. “... i... is... one...!”

Lan Qiren quickly understood that the information the disciple was meant to deliver was significant. “Breathe.”

Taking a deep breath, the disciple quickly shouted, “The Wen Sect is gone!”

The class paled.

Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

The Wen Sect is gone, and Wei Wuxian, Jiang Cheng, and Lan Wangji are left to deal with the aftermath.

Chapter Notes

Helloooooooo! I'm soooooo sorry! I work at a snail's pace, but the second chapter is finally here! I apologize to anyone who's been waiting and I welcome the new readers!

I hope you enjoy

(' ◦ • ~ • ◦ ') ♡

See the end of the chapter for [more notes](#)

A few days had passed since the Lan Sect disciple interrupted the classroom. At first, the students had been skeptical. How could they not when the Wen Sect was the most powerful among the five sects? It simply couldn't disappear into thin air. However, the disciple talked about the Lan Sect's Worldly Map, a map that showed the location of places in real time, and reiterated that the Wen Sect had completely disappeared off of the map. There had been no explanation as to how the Wen Sect had disappeared, and no one had a clue as to how it happened because such an event had never occurred before.

Of course, the event sparked conflict. If there was something out there powerful enough to make the Wen Sect disappear (whatever disappearing entailed), then the other sects were in danger. Some of the sect heirs demanded to be returned home so that they can protect their families, but the Lan Sect denied their requests, stating that the Lan Sect would be the safest place for them because it was the sect furthest from Qishan. After forcing the students to calm down, Lan Qiren departed, leaving Lan Xichen in charge.

For the first few days, all the children were extremely anxious. They couldn't sleep at night, and many of them had turned to partying to relieve their stress. However, as the days stretched on without any word of other sects mysteriously disappearing, the disciples began to calm down.

"I think that some otherworldly power came down from the heavens and smited the Wens," a Nie cultivator said. "They were becoming bold. Are you aware that Wen Ruohan had killed our previous sect leader?"

“Shush,” his friend hissed. “We don’t truly know if they’ve disappeared. What if the Worldly Map was wrong?”

The duo were walking through the Cloud Recesses. Before Lan Qiren departed, he announced that all classes would be placed on hold because the Lan Sect would need to place their focus on what happened to the Wen Sect, so that meant that the students were free to do what they wanted. Some of the guest disciples spent this surprise break by going into Caiyi town. Others spent their days oversleeping. There was a large assortment of things to do now that classes weren’t in session.

“For a magical tool to break, is such a thing even possible? Especially one that’s existed for over a millennia?”

“Would it be surprising if it did? Just because it hadn’t occurred until now doesn’t mean that it can’t happen.”

A Jin disciple who overheard them joined. This fellow had been one of the nicer ones, but because of his personality, he had become one of Jin Zixun’s punching bags. He avoided the Jins and preferred to interact with people from other sects. “The Wen Sect’s disappearance isn’t the only thing that’s strange. The Yiling Patriarch had disappeared since that day too.” The Nie cultivator quirked his brow.

“How is that strange? He didn’t belong in this timeline in the first place?” The Nie cultivator sighed. “Though his company was quite enjoyable, there was something about that man that seemed off. I just can’t figure out what it is.”

His friend scoffed. “Now that everyone’s obsessing over him, you’re suddenly against him.”

“Not against,” he replied, “just pointing out that something about that man had been strange. We’re all familiar with Wei Wuxian. Naturally, the Yiling Patriarch had some traits that were similar to Wei Wuxian, but he felt strange.”

“Goodness. You’re not trying to be like some of those other disciples, are you? The ones who were fawning over the Yiling Patriarch then hated him once he began to grow popular?”

The boy sputtered indignantly. “Of course not!”

His friend only nodded to appease him, seemingly convinced that the Nie disciple was one of those *other disciples*. “Speaking of Wei Wuxian, we haven’t seen him since that day either.”

The Jin disciple began laughing. “Well, in his defense, what was the first thing that people did once Lan Qiren left the classroom?”

“I wasn’t aware that our classmates could be so shameless,” the boy huffed, recalling what had happened.

Once Lan Qiren left the classroom, Wei Wuxian had been left to deal with a frantic Jiang Cheng. Though both of them had been worried for the Jiang Sect, it was Wei Wuxian who had surprisingly kept a clear head. It had been a worrisome time for everyone since the

majority of the guest disciples were influential people in their respective sects. One student, in particular, did not help with the disorder at all.

He had lunged for Wei Wuxian and tried to kiss him on the lips.

“If I were to die, I want to die knowing that I had given away my first kiss!” He declared in hysteria.

The disciples of the Jiang Sect specialized in speed and agility, so it was natural for Wei Wuxian, the Jiang Sect’s *head disciple*, to easily dodge the impending attack. However, that one boy’s actions had encouraged many more to respond similarly. Wei Wuxian had resorted to dodging kisses and hugs while Lan Wangji and Jiang Cheng punished the more passionate one. Even when Wei Wuxian knocked a boy into one of the walls, almost breaking it in the process, more than a quarter of their class, in their terrified frenzy, continued their assault.

The Nie disciple chuckled. “Our young master had been so terrified that day. I saw him hugging his fan while huddling in a corner.”

“Don’t act like you weren’t, especially when Lan Wangji snapped.”

“Who would expect *the* Lan Wangji to go along with Wei Wuxian’s act? *Those who wish to court Wei Ying must go through me,*’ he said. I wasn’t even aware that Lan Wangji was at birth name level with Wei Wuxian yet. I mean, I hadn’t been surprised when Wei Wuxian did it, but *Lan Wangji*?”

“True,” the Jin disciple nodded, sagely.

Lan Wangji hadn’t been an individual prone to acting violently. People had only seen him lashing out when Wei Wuxian was involved, but that had made sense. Wei Wuxian was a notorious troublemaker who would never fail to make a Lan disciple choke from pure frustration. The Lan Sect had been built on principles, but Wei Wuxian had always been an unconventional person. He was good, that had been true, but he was also rambunctious. He practically broke every rule just by existing.

Technically, this event had happened because of Wei Wuxian, and because Wei Wuxian was involved, Lan Wangji was acting out.

“He’s terrifying,” the Jin disciple decided.

“I thought he was scary before, but nowadays he carries a discipline paddle everywhere he goes. He holds it like a sword.”

“He holds that discipline paddle more often than he does his own sword at this point. I never thought I’d see the day that Lan Wangji carries a discipline paddle.”

“A discipline paddle is such a crude device; it doesn’t suit a young master, not to mention Lan Wangji,” the Nie disciple added. “Imagine. People would look at him and go, ‘oh! What a pristine young master!’ Then, they’d look over him and notice that blunt *weapon* he has in his hand. It doesn’t suit his image at all!”

His friend laughed. "Jiang Cheng and Lan Wangji seem to get along these days."

"If by getting along, you mean *glaring at each other any opportunity they get*, then yeah. Sure. They get along just perfectly."

"Lan Wangji always glares at people," he pointed out. "So does Jiang Cheng. I'm talking about how it feels like they know what each other is thinking."

The Nie disciple quirked a brow. "Like Zewu-Jun? Are you saying that Jiang Cheng actually knows what Lan Wangji is thinking?"

"That's the thing. Jiang Cheng acts like he knows what Zewu-Jun is thinking too!"

"What gives you that impression?" The Jin disciple asked. He was growing tired and began moving toward a nearby tree to rest. The Nie disciple and his friend had grown fond of this Jin disciple and followed him toward the tree where he sat down at. The Jin disciple leaned his back into the bark of the tree while the other two boys sat in front of him. The three of them formed a perfect triangle.

"Well, one, Jiang Cheng is spending more time with the Twin Jades which is unusual in itself. Usually, he'd be with Wei Wuxian and Nie Huaisang, but Wei Wuxian hasn't been coming out of his room and Nie Huaisang is always in Caiyi Town."

"Accompanying other sect heirs isn't strange though?"

"It is when it's the Twin Jades you're accompanying. They're practically untouchable. My second reason is the way that they interact."

"How they interact?" The Nie disciple repeated.

"Yes! I once caught Jiang Cheng staring at Zewu-Jun, and his expressions kept on changing. One second, he'd be happy, and the next, he'd be shocked. Zewu-Jun would nod sometimes as though Jiang Cheng *were* saying something."

"Okay... That is quite strange."

"It is!"

"These days have been so strange. Teacher Lan and Wei Wuxian are gone, Lan Wangji carries a discipline paddle around, and Jiang Cheng gets along with the Twin Jades." The Nie disciple laid down in the grass to stare up at the cloudy sky.

"I feel like you're forgetting something," his friend said.

"I agree. I feel like you're forgetting something much more obvious," the Jin disciple agreed, and the Nie disciple lifted his head up to glare at them both.

"Okay, fine! *And* I just realized how attractive Wei Wuxian is!" He cried, giving in.

The two boys snickered at their friend's distress, but they could emphasize. Most of the class had become infatuated with Wei Wuxian to some degree. There were the more bold ones who sought the boy's hand in marriage, but there were those who just acknowledged that Wei Wuxian was a good person. An attractive but rowdy boy.

"God," the Nie disciple whined, "am I a cut sleeve?"

"Are you interested in other men?" The Jin disciple asked, and the Nie cultivator's eyes widened in horror.

"No!"

"Then I don't think you are one?" It was a question. The boy wasn't quite sure whether their newfound attraction to Wei Wuxian made them cut sleeves, but he thought that cut sleeves would seek to have multiple relationships with men. If they didn't seek any other relationships with men, were they truly cut sleeves? "Is being a cut sleeve truly that bad though?"

The Nie disciple stared at him silently for a moment. "No," he finally said, thinking more about it, "but I like women!"

"Okay, then you like women," his friend repeated with a smirk. "Honestly, I feel bad for Wei Wuxian. It's obvious that he doesn't want any of this."

The Nie disciple erupted into laughter. "I passed by his dorm once. You should've seen the presents lining up his door! I'm sure that he couldn't get out even if he wanted to. There were too many presents blocking the way."

"Presents. How nice."

Suddenly, they heard rustling. They looked around, searching for the source of the sound before realizing that the rustling had come from above.

The leaves of the tree shook gently and the group of friends swore that they heard a murmur. A red ribbon appeared, hanging between the leaves. The vibrant red of the fabric deeply contrasted with the deep green of the trees.

"What the hell?" The Nie disciple said once the leaves stopped shaking. "Hold on. That ribbon looks familiar."

His friend nodded. "I think that's Wei Wuxian's ribbon."

"What's Wei Wuxian's ribbon doing in a tree?" He frowned. "A bird must have stolen it and landed in that tree. It must be quite a big bird considering how much the tree shook. I'm going to grab it."

"So you can give it to Wei Wuxian and propose for his hand in marriage?" His friend teased. The Nie disciple grimaced.

"No. I'm just doing the right thing and giving the ribbon back to his owner." He stood up.

The tree was quite high. Even for a man as tall as the Nie disciple, the tree was far taller in comparison. In order to grab the red ribbon, he had to climb the tree a bit. He hugged the trunk and proceeded to climb. When he nearly reached the top, he grabbed for the red ribbon. As he pulled the ribbon down, he heard a yelp. He thought that noise had belonged to the bird that had somehow stolen Wei Wuxian's red ribbon.

He hadn't expected to tug a haggard person's head down with it.

"Ah!" He yelled. In his shock, he let go of the tree and promptly fell on his bottom. He shut his eyes tightly at the impact and rubbed at his tailbone.

"Wei Wuxian?" His friend questioned. When he opened his eyes, he saw tired silver eyes staring back. Wei Wuxian's head peeked out from the thick leaves above him, his long dark ponytail swinging in the air. His arms hung limply at his sides before giving the group of boys a tired wave.

"That's my name!" Wei Wuxian said. His eyes were half shut, as though he were just awakening from a nap.

"Why are you in a tree?!"

"Please don't tell anyone I'm here," Wei Wuxian begged.

"Were you sleeping?" The Nie disciple asked, and Wei Wuxian huffed.

"If you're so curious as to why I'm in a tree, then I'll give you an answer, but you have to promise me that you won't tell anyone that I'm here." The group of disciples nodded solemnly as they stared at Wei Wuxian, who was still dangling from a branch hidden among the tree leaves like he belonged there. "Good, good! This is my temporary home for the time being!"

The Jin disciple choked. "E-Excuse me?"

"You see, when a half brained disciple recognizes that you're a perfect mate despite being *male*, he'll become mindless and proceed to continuously invade your privacy," Wei Wuxian told them. He yawned and rubbed at his eyes. Seeing Wei Wuxian paw at his face made the Nie disciple's heart pound in his chest. "When you have *multiple* half brained disciples going after you, then your chastity becomes endangered."

"But that doesn't explain why you're in a tree."

"It kind of does actually," Wei Wuxian argued, pouting. "Whenever I slept in my room, I would wake up to Jiang Cheng violently kicking someone off of me, which isn't a pleasant way to wake up as I've learned. Other times, I'd wake up to someone climbing on top of me, which was even worse, so I can't really sleep in my room."

"But everyone thinks that you're in your room."

"It's impressive what a few pillows, a blanket, and an illusion talisman can do," he shrugged. "I've heard multiple people walk past this tree declaring that they stole a kiss from me." Wei

Wuxian visibly shivered. The red ribbon that the Nie disciple had pulled had become loose and was currently sliding down Wei Wuxian's dark tresses. "Anyway, look at what you've done to my hair! Aren't you ashamed? It's a mess now!"

Wei Wuxian swung back into the tree, disappearing among the leaves, before he climbed down the trunk and leaned his back against it. He sat next to the Jin disciple who stared at him wide eyed because the subject of their gossips was sitting right next to him. Wei Wuxian's hair had been messed up by the tugging, and it currently sat limp on his shoulder. Wei Wuxian ran his fingers through his hair and pulled the red ribbon out, allowing it to flow down his chest and back.

The disciples' breaths stuttered as Wei Wuxian tucked his ribbon between his lips and casually combed his fingers through his hair. His hair shimmered under the sunlight. Wei Wuxian held his gaze down, and the boys were entranced by his long lashes. Then, Wei Wuxian pulled his hair up, flexing the lithe muscles of his body beneath his clothes, and tied it up with his red ribbon.

They were *not* cut sleeves, but they couldn't deny that Wei Wuxian was an attractive boy.

"Wei Wuxian!" The boys jumped when they suddenly heard another voice. They twisted their bodies towards the voice and saw Jiang Cheng heading towards them with Lan Wangji trailing not far behind. Lan Wangji was holding a discipline paddle.

When Lan Wangji saw them, he glared, his grip on the discipline paddle tightening.

"Jiang Cheng?" Wei Wuxian chirped, blissfully unaware of how Lan Wangji caused the three boys to become paralyzed in fear. "Why's Lan Zhan with you?"

Jiang Cheng snapped his head toward Lan Wangji and glowered.

'Look, I'm allowing my brother to sleep with you in the Jingshi,' Jiang Cheng thought, 'if you lay your nasty little paws on him, I will fight you.'

Lan Wangji reciprocated his glare. *'Wei Ying deserves no less. How could you allow him to sleep here?'*

'It was his choice.' Jiang Cheng rolled his eyes. *'I can't believe I thought you hated him at one point. You're so whipped, Lan Wangji.'*

'It is just that you lack observation skills.'

'Wei Wuxian was in the same boat as me,' Jiang Cheng pointed out in his mind, and he saw how Lan Wangji flinched. It wasn't obvious to the normal eye, but Jiang Cheng could feel Lan Wangji flinch *mentally*. He indulged in his newfound ability to read the Twin Jades of Lan. At first, it had shocked Jiang Cheng to understand the Twin Jades so clearly, especially Lan Wangji. He was surprised to find out that boy even had emotions, and he was even more shocked to discover how much internal conflict Lan Wangji experienced on a daily basis. All of those internal conflicts involved his brother more or less. *'Are you saying that my brother lacks observation? I doubt that he has a clue of your feelings for him.'*

'Wei Ying... Is only innocent. That is why he does not know.'

'Your company has tortured me more than it has helped me,' Jiang Cheng thought, unconsciously releasing a guttural noise from his throat. He had drawn up his nose, as though he had smelled something unpleasant. 'How does your brother deal with you? I was close to jumping off of this damned mountain when the first dirty thought you've had of my brother appeared in my mind.'

Lan Wangji had the *audacity* to look ashamed. *'They are not something that I had created with intention.'*

'I'm surprised I haven't choked you to death yet for thinking those vulgar things about Wei Wuxian. Actually, should I murder you right now?'

Lan Wangji frowned. *'Killing is not permitted in the Cloud Recesses.'*

'Oh, I'll show you what's permitted, you fucking perv—'

"Jiang Cheng?" Wei Wuxian called out, interrupting Lan Wangji and Jiang Cheng's internal argument. The tension around them had grown so thick that one could probably cut through it with a sword. The disciples around Wei Wuxian were trembling from the sheer power radiating off of the two. "Are you okay? You began grunting, and it was really disturbing."

Jiang Cheng flushed, "Wei Wuxian!" He sighed. "Lan Wangji is inviting you to sleep in his place." Jiang Cheng sent Lan Wangji a glare, as if to say *I dare you*.

"Lan Zhan did?" He looked towards Lan Wangji, and he looked so hopeful that Jiang Cheng wanted to barf.

"Don't call him that," Jiang Cheng demanded. "Don't refer to him by his birth name."

Wei Wuxian tilted his head. Then, he grinned. "Oh, Jiang Cheng! Are you jealous?"

"Don't be ridiculous, Wei Wuxian. It's just that something has been brought to my attention." He scowled remembering Lan Wangji's fantasies about kissing his brother and... and... Jiang Cheng grimaced. He hadn't even been aware that two men could engage in such activities, and Lan Wangji had always been the one to... insert it... in Wei Wuxian. He had always been so forceful! His fury intensified when remembering the more explicit of Lan Wangji's daydreams.

"You're jealous," Wei Wuxian insisted.

"I'm not!"

"Lan Zhan! Lan Zhan! Lan Zhan!" Wei Wuxian chirped. Jiang Cheng felt Lan Wangji become flustered. Jiang Cheng's knuckles promptly cracked.

"Wei Wuxian. I am warning you." Jiang Cheng growled. "Do. Not."

Jiang Cheng hated how Lan Wangji looked as though he were in heaven. Of course, the Second Jade's pure happiness was invisible to the normal person, but Jiang Cheng, unfortunately, wasn't a normal person anymore. Ever since he partnered with the Twin Jades, it became easier to follow their train of thought and read their expressions.

Wei Wuxian waved his hand around, flippantly. "Yeah, yeah. You're just jealous." Then he turned towards Lan Wangji. "Lan Zhan! I hadn't expected this from you though. You actually do like me more than I thought!"

Lan Wangji's expression didn't shift. "The rules state that we should assist those in need."

'Bullshit,' Jiang Cheng thought.

'Silence, Jiang Wanyin,' Lan Wangji replied, mentally.

"Still, how bold of you to invite me to your room, Lan Zhan," Wei Wuxian smirked and leaned against his hand.

The disciples who were sitting around Wei Wuxian stared at him for a bit, stunned by how attractive Wei Wuxian was. Confident and cocky—it was a combination that they never thought they would find beauty in, but as they've learned, the combination was devastating when paired with the right face. They didn't stare for long because the pressure they felt suddenly increased. They looked at Lan Wangji and found that he was glaring at them. Compared to them, Lan Wangji felt like a predator, prepared to strike any moment, and the disciples, naturally, were terrified.

"W-Wei Wuxian," the Nie disciple stuttered out. "Have a restful slumber with Lan Wangji!"

Then the disciples promptly scampered off.

Wei Wuxian stared at their quickly disappearing figures. "What a strange bunch," he huffed. He turned toward Lan Wangji. "You don't have to worry about me, Lan Zhan. Honestly, I'm used to sleeping outside."

"It is unhealthy for you," Lan Wangji replied. "You have only been resting outside for a few days. One cannot get used to sleeping outside in that duration of time."

Wei Wuxian bursted out in laughter, and Lan Wangji looked concerned about this sudden outburst. "No, no," Wei Wuxian said with mirth. "When I said I'm used to sleeping outside, I meant at Lotus Pier."

Lan Wangji's eyes widened, and he threw Jiang Cheng an accusing glare.

'You allow him to sleep outside?' Lan Wangji thought furiously, knowing full well that Jiang Cheng could hear his thoughts.

'I try to stop him,' Jiang Cheng thought in reply, *'but it's hard when he's a moron who spends his evenings hunting pheasants. We usually find him the next day sleeping in the middle of nowhere with a dead pheasant. He's like a cat.'*

“So that’s why you don’t have to worry, Lan Zhan,” Wei Wuxian chirped, interrupting their thoughts. “My body is *very* durable!”

Jiang Cheng shot Lan Wangji a dirty look after seeing the way his ears flushed at Wei Wuxian’s words. *‘Lan Wangji, I will end you.’*

Lan Wangji promptly ignored him. “You will not have to sleep outside. I am inviting you to sleep with me.”

Wei Wuxian stood up, dusting his robes from the dirt he had gathered off the ground. He placed his hand on his hip. “I really doubt you have two beds, Lan Zhan, so one of us would have to sleep on the floor.”

“We can sleep on the same bed,” Lan Wangji said. Jiang Cheng sputtered.

“Lan Wangji!” He shouted. “I will not allow Wei Wuxian to—”

“Lan Zhan, I didn’t expect that from you!” Wei Wuxian interrupted. “How bold! But you really shouldn’t sacrifice your comfort to help people. I’ll be fine, I swear.”

“You shouldn’t be sacrificing your comfort because of the actions of others,” Lan Wangji shot back.

“I’ll be fine.”

“Prolonged lack of sleep is detrimental to your health.”

Wei Wuxian scoffed. “I don’t know what you’re talking about. I’m sleeping just fine.”

Neither Lan Wangji or Jiang Cheng looked convinced. “It is not comfortable to sleep in a tree.”

“I can sleep anywhere.”

“You have eye bags under your eyes.”

“You’re seeing things.”

“Wei Ying.”

“Lan Zhan,” Wei Wuxian whined. “I’m fine! I swear that I am.”

“Lying is forbidden within the Cloud Recesses,” Lan Wangji furrowed his brows.

“I am *not* lying!”

“Wei Wuxian,” Jiang Cheng snapped. “I don’t want you to go anywhere near Lan Wangji, but I’m fucking offering this to you because you look like shit. Well, you look shittier than usual.”

Wei Wuxian wailed indignantly. “How cruel, Jiang Cheng.”

“Your face is awful to look at as it is, but, now, you look like a corpse.”

Wei Wuxian frowned. He didn't look that bad, did he? It was true that he hadn't had a good night's sleep for a while, but he didn't want his brother or his friend—if Lan Wangji could be called a friend—to know how much his class troubled him.

Truthfully, he never saw his classmates as a threat until these days. Their abilities were far below Wei Wuxian's, but their determination was impressive. It was so impressive that it had troubled Wei Wuxian. If they weren't so determined, then Wei Wuxian wouldn't have to dodge his obnoxious classmates left and right, fearing for his chastity every second because these imbeciles couldn't control their desires for whatever reason.

Even though Wei Wuxian desired some well needed rest, he was reluctant to inconvenience Lan Wangji. He enjoyed dawdling around Lan Wangji and pulling reactions out of him, but he only wanted to annoy him. Now that Lan Wangji was offering his assistance, Wei Wuxian was reluctant to take it because he believed that this would actually bring trouble to Lan Wangji.

Lan Wangji was too good, and Wei Wuxian refused to take advantage of that kindness.

The truth of the matter, however, was that Lan Wangji wanted Wei Wuxian to be in his room, in his bed, and sharing his warmth. He wanted to bring Wei Wuxian into his arms and bury his head in those dark tresses and use his supposed unconscious status to his advantage. Normally, Lan Wangji wouldn't want to exploit Wei Wuxian in any way, but he was on a race against time. In the beginning, he had the convenience of people being ignorant to Wei Wuxian's allure, but that Yiling Patriarch (also devastatingly attractive) showed the world just how stunning Wei Wuxian was. Lan Wangji had to face the fact that he had fallen for Wei Wuxian.

And Jiang Cheng was now acutely aware of Lan Wangji's infatuation with his brother. Lan Wangji hated him for invading his thoughts in a fashion so similar to his brother, but the unprecedented event with the Yiling Patriarch changed their relationship. They found that they had a similar goal: secure Wei Wuxian's chastity.

Of course, the difference between them was that Lan Wangji also wanted to protect Wei Wuxian's chastity because he wanted to claim Wei Wuxian for himself whereas Jiang Cheng desired to protect it because Wei Wuxian was his brother. Jiang Yanli was destined to depart to Lanling one day, so Jiang Cheng wanted to hold on to Wei Wuxian for as long as possible, not that he would ever admit that he was actually fond of his brother. Wei Wuxian knew anyway, so it was fine. Jiang Cheng was not expecting his brother to leave him for the next few years at the very least.

“Fine,” Wei Wuxian agreed, finally giving in. “But I'm sleeping on the floor.”

Jiang Cheng suddenly beamed. He crossed his arms and scoffed, though his good mood was awfully noticeable. “Of course you'll be sleeping on the floor,” Jiang Cheng said. “It's Lan Wangji's room. How could you be the one sleeping on the bed?”

“After spending a few nights in a tree, you should have the luxury to sleep in a bed,” Lan Wangji insisted, and Jiang Cheng glared.

“Second Young Master Lan, please do not encourage Wei Wuxian to act inappropriately,” Jiang Cheng advised. “It is *your* room. A young master such as yourself shouldn’t sleep on the floor.”

“But you’re allowing Wei Ying to sleep on the floor?” Lan Wangji countered. “The head disciple of the Jiang Sect deserves better than a floor.”

“He had been sleeping in a tree until now. I’m sure he’ll do fine sleeping on the floor. I’ll supply pillows and blankets.”

“Pillows and blankets cannot substitute a bed.”

“But they do better than a tree, and Wei Wuxian *wants* to sleep on the floor.”

“Wei Ying cannot possibly want to sleep on the floor. Most likely, he is doing this because he does not want to be an inconvenience.” Wei Wuxian flinched when he realized he had been called out.

“It is still inappropriate for *you* to be the one sleeping on the floor,” Jiang Cheng criticized.

“That is why I am inviting Wei Wuxian to sleep in the same bed with me,” Lan Wangji reminded him.

‘Are you forgetting that we’re here so that he can finally have a proper rest?’ Jiang Cheng demanded, internally.

‘How can he have a proper rest when he is on the floor?’

‘It’s better than a tree!’

‘A bed is better than a floor.’

‘Stop trying to take advantage of my brother, Lan Wangji!’

‘I am not, Jiang Wanyin,’ Lan Wangji insisted. *‘I only desire for him to get proper rest after you failed to do so.’*

‘If I could stop our classmates from harassing him, don’t you think I would?’

Wei Wuxian felt as though he were missing something as he watched Lan Wangji and Jiang Cheng stare at each other with furrowed brows. If there were words being exchanged, Wei Wuxian couldn’t hear them. He felt left out.

“Please let me sleep on the floor, Lan Zhan,” Wei Wuxian finally said. “Jiang Cheng’s right. A floor’s better than a tree.”

Jiang Cheng sent Lan Wangji a smug look, and Lan Wangji seethed.

“If those are your wishes, fine,” Lan Wangji snapped. Wei Wuxian was quite taken aback. Was Lan Wangji angry at him? Wei Wuxian felt like he had been wronged. After all, he wanted to sleep on the floor so that Lan Wangji could sleep on the bed. He was being considerate of Lan Wangji for once, and Lan Wangji was *still* angry at him! “Follow me to my home. Jiang Wanyin, get Wei Ying’s things.”

‘If you touch him, we will duel,’ Jiang Cheng thought, and Lan Wangji didn’t reply. He simply looked away, allowing Jiang Cheng to curse his back as he headed toward the Jingshi with Wei Wuxian in tow.

Wei Wuxian hadn’t explored the Cloud Recesses in a while, he had almost forgotten what an ethereal place it was. His head had been muddled, anxious with the possibility of a kiss being stolen from him. Wei Wuxian had a reputation as a flirt, but the truth was that he hadn’t even held a girl’s hand. Now that he had found himself in a situation (thanks to his future self) that involved multiple people courting him, he was lost.

Truthfully, Wei Wuxian had been envious of his future self. His future self had so many gifts and it was clear that people were fond of him. It was silly to be envious of himself, but Wei Wuxian thrived off of attention and fondness. His future self had received so much of it without even trying. Wei Wuxian had to wonder if this was something that his future self had to deal with.

He stomped down the idea because he had never seen his future self bothered with marriage proposals and the like. His future self had dumped all of the negative consequences of their fondness onto Wei Wuxian while indulging in all of the good ones! Wei Wuxian was absolutely annoyed. To take responsibility for his own actions—he had been taught to do that, but to take responsibility for his future self’s actions were something he never thought he’d do!

But the Cloud Recesses was a truly peaceful place, even the air felt refreshing. Because the Cloud Recesses was located in the mountains, the air had a rejuvenating bite that could calm anyone down, and because the Lans meditated on a daily basis, the resentment there was practically nonexistent. It had a completely different beauty compared to Lotus Pier. Where Lotus Pier represented freedom and youth, the Cloud Recesses represented discipline and maturity. Wei Wuxian didn’t belong in a place like this, where everything was so orderly. He belonged in Lotus Pier, where the sun reflected off of the waters and people cheered openly. However, Wei Wuxian could appreciate that the Cloud Recesses was beautiful, and, truthfully, Wei Wuxian needed this calm right now.

“Wei Ying,” Lan Wangji called, pulling Wei Wuxian out of his thoughts, “are you alright?”

Wei Wuxian smiled and tilted his head. “Why? Worried, Lan Zhan?”

Lan Wangji stayed silent for a while. In normal circumstances, he would have told Wei Wuxian that he was ridiculous, but he didn’t want to drive Wei Wuxian away. Too many people had their eyes on Wei Wuxian, and they showed their affection so openly. If Lan Wangji were to continuously push Wei Wuxian away, wouldn’t Wei Wuxian eventually grow tired of him? Lan Wangji didn’t want that. Gathering all of the courage he could, he told Wei Wuxian his true feelings.

“Mn,” he said.

Silence.

Wei Wuxian made a face. “Mn?” Wei Wuxian repeated. “What’s ‘mn’ supposed to even mean?”

“Mn,” Lan Wangji said again.

“Does that mean ‘yes’?” Wei Wuxian asked.

“Mn.”

“I’ll take that as a yes!” Wei Wuxian declared. “So you are worried about me! How sweet, Lan Zhan! Am I right though? Does ‘mn’ mean ‘yes’? Are you actually worried about me, hm?”

“I am,” Lan Wangji said truthfully. “I am worried about you, Wei Ying.”

Hearing Lan Wangji sincerely tell him that he was worried caused Wei Wuxian to blush. He hadn’t expected Lan Wangji to actually admit that he had cared, and Wei Wuxian believed that Lan Wangji *didn’t* care. He only wanted to annoy Lan Wangji again, rouse some sort of emotion within Lan Wangji that he hadn’t seen yet, but it seemed as though the tables had turned because it was Lan Wangji who had received an emotion he hadn’t seen before from Wei Wuxian. Wei Wuxian was overconfident. He always wore a smile on his face that screamed that he knew what he was doing, but the Wei Wuxian in front of him became a flustered mess because of Lan Wangji’s honest words.

Lan Wangji wanted to see more.

As much as Lan Wangji wanted to encourage more emotions from Wei Wuxian, he couldn’t. His own words had caused his ears to burn from embarrassment.

“Wow, Lan Zhan!” Wei Wuxian chirped. “You’re so honest.”

Lan Wangji stayed silent.

“Why? Are you embarrassed now?” Wei Wuxian looked amused. He looked like a cat who found a mouse to toy with, and Lan Wangji’s fluster only increased. “How cute, Lan Zhan. I guess you weren’t honest with me before.”

“I am honest,” Lan Wangji declared.

“Oh, really?” Wei Wuxian voice dropped, treading the thin line between playful and coquettish. “Then what do you think of me? Do you think that the Yiling Patriarch is attractive like the rest of our class?”

Oh goodness. Lan Wangji was absolutely floored. Would he have to admit his attraction, right here? In front of Wei Wuxian? He felt lightheaded as he said, “Mn.”

Wei Wuxian beamed. “Lan Zhan! So honest!”

“The Yiling Patriarch and Wei Ying are... Very attractive.” Lan Wangji will not mention the numerous nights where he had trouble sleeping because of them. One Wei Wuxian was lethal all on his own. Lan Wangji hated how everyone seemed so close to Wei Wuxian while he felt so far away. When the Yiling Patriarch arrived, that feeling only intensified.

Lan Wangji now had to deal with the consequences of two Wei Wuxians, one who had boyish and youthful charm while the other acted more mature, more level headed. Lan Wangji had not been prepared for two, and his mind paid the ultimate price.

Fantasies of Wei Wuxian AND the Yiling Patriarch being fond of him... Inappropriately fond on some nights...

Wei Wuxian was oblivious to Lan Wangji’s inner conflict, so he reached out for Lan Wangji’s hand, the one that was gripping onto a discipline paddle. Lan Wangji hadn’t been paying attention, so when he suddenly felt warmth envelop his hand, he flinched.

“Lan Zhan,” Wei Ying said, lifting Lan Wangji’s hand and, by extension, the discipline paddle, “why are you carrying this thing around?”

“There are many people who need to be disciplined,” Lan Wangji answered.

“Don’t the Lans normally punish people with scriptures?”

Lan Wangji recalled the numerous instances where people would leer at Wei Wuxian. Their eyes scanning his entire being as they, most likely, remembered the Yiling Patriarch who was all sharp edges and bright smiles. Those longing stares alone had unsettled Lan Wangji, but he couldn’t do anything about them, so when a guest disciple stepped out of line, Lan Wangji wasted no time in punishing them.

Over time, he and Jiang Cheng had developed a relationship akin to partners in crime. They were reluctant to be partners, but they were partners nonetheless. Jiang Cheng, whenever he wanted to punish someone, would go to Lan Wangji, and Lan Wangji never hesitated to beat them.

Of course, the rules dictate that he shouldn’t be emotional, but the turmoil he was experiencing couldn’t be seen with the naked eye. Outwardly, he seemed calm as he punished the disciples cruelly with the discipline paddle, but inwardly, he rejoiced in their pained screams. It felt good to blow off steam while punishing the disciples who had stepped outside of bounds.

“Scriptures were not efficient enough,” Lan Wangji insisted. “They had to be reminded through physical measures. The number of delinquents had risen.”

“But why do you carry it around?”

Lan Wangji wouldn’t tell Wei Wuxian, but whenever he caught a disciple planning to harass Wei Wuxian, Lan Wangji would force them to their knees and beat them. Events such as

those had occurred more often than what should be appropriate, and he began carrying the discipline paddle due to its convenience.

“As a warning,” Lan Wangji answered. It had been true. The disciples had grown terrified of him. Lan Wangji became infamous for carrying around a discipline paddle everywhere he goes. Finally, Lan Wangji and Wei Wuxian arrived at the Jingshi. “We are here.”

Lan Wangji slid open the door, and Wei Wuxian sauntered inside. “Wow,” he said. “Your place is so neat, Lan Zhan!”

“Mn,” Lan Wangji replied. “I like to keep it clean.”

Lan Wangji found it cute how Wei Wuxian danced around his home. He acted like he belonged there. He didn’t act like a guest as he turned over books and curiously picked up items. Lan Wangji found it endearing when Wei Wuxian would hold things gently between his sword calloused hands, as though he were afraid to break them. He truly vitalized Lan Wangji’s home.

“You can stay here for the time being,” Lan Wangji said. “Until my uncle returns.”

Wei Wuxian stilled. “What do you think happened to the Wen Sect anyway, Lan Zhan?” Wei Wuxian asked.

“I do not know,” Lan Wangji answered. “Such an event had never occurred before.”

“Hmm,” Wei Wuxian hummed. “I’ve heard many theories. I heard some people say that a mythical creature awakened and all of the sects are doomed.”

Lan Wangji frowned. “That is unlikely. There has been no other disturbances since the Wen Sect, and there has been no signs of a creature escaping.”

Wei Wuxian nodded. “That’s what I thought too. No yang energy spreading to other areas or rumors about a mythical beast. I mean, if there truly was one, I’m sure that rumors would circulate and cities would disappear. Whatever had happened to the Wen Sect was special,” Wei Wuxian reasoned. He set down the book he was holding and sat at Lan Wangji’s table, his knees bent and calves settled beneath his bottom. “Another theory I heard was that the gods got angry with the Wen Sect’s arrogance and smited them.”

Lan Wangji cringed. “Gods do not interact with people, usually. That is unless they benefit.”

“Yeah,” Wei Wuxian agreed. “Now, my favorite theory is that they were experimenting with something they weren’t supposed to and it blew up in their faces.”

Lan Wangji minisculely quirked a brow. “Experimenting?”

“I’m not sure about you, Lan Zhan, but I found this theory to be the most interesting.”

“Why?”

“Think about it. If the Wen Sect had actually found something that could make them disappear, then it must be powerful, right? Imagine if someone were to find out what they were messing with and use it to their advantage. They could make a weapon. Cause whole areas to disappear!”

Lan Wangji’s breath stuttered. He was horrified with the thought of a weapon that can wipe out whole sects. “You find that interesting?”

“Is it not? It’s dangerous, of course, but if it were true, then there could be many things we can uncover.”

“Do not meddle with things you do not understand nor things that could be dangerous.”

“But Lan Zhan, if I can think of this, then there must be others following the same train of thought as me.”

Lan Wangji could not disagree with that, but he was still horrified at the thought that such a dangerous thing can exist.

When his uncle departed, Lan Wangji had been worried that it would be the last time he ever saw him. If there was something out there destroying sects, then could his uncle possibly escape with his life? Lan Qiren was a righteous man, and Lan Wangji looked up to him. Lan Wangji was unsure of what his uncle would do if he found himself in a situation where he had to choose between his own life and the lives of others. Lan Wangji could only hope that Lan Qiren would flee and not overestimate his abilities. As selfish as it was, he would like his uncle to come home. He wouldn’t want his uncle to die in a suicide mission.

“What have you been doing these days, Lan Zhan?” Wei Wuxian asked.

Lan Wangji recalled the many times he drank tea with Jiang Cheng and his brother, discussing about what to do about the Wen Sect and Wei Wuxian. Jiang Cheng had been adamant about joining in their conversation. It was a discussion about his brother, Jiang Cheng had defended. He also remembered the times he was almost driven crazy by the shameless remarks people had about the Yiling Patriarch and Wei Wuxian.

For the past few days, he had been in the Lan Sect’s Ancestral Hall, beating guest disciples and Lan disciples alike.

“What I have been doing is not interesting,” Lan Wangji said. “What have *you* been doing?”

Wei Wuxian looked as though he didn’t believe him. “You were able to walk around the Cloud Recesses while I was stuck in a tree.”

“I was not aware that you were in a tree until recently,” Lan Wangji admitted. “I only knew when Jiang Wanyin blundered.”

“Jiang Cheng blundered?”

“Mn. He was talking about you and accidentally mentioned that you hadn’t been in your room.”

“Well, the only thing I had done recently was sit in a tree. I couldn’t go anywhere.” Wei Wuxian thought for a bit. “Why weren’t there any disciples on our way here?”

“All disciples avoid the path to the Jingshi.” They had begun avoiding the path to avoid Lan Wangji. “You appear tired. You should rest.”

“But—”

“We will be able to talk more later,” Lan Wangji said with a smile, and Wei Wuxian felt his breath stutter. He had never seen anything more beautiful and peaceful than Lan Wangji’s smile. In Wei Wuxian’s opinion, it was more beautiful than the lakes of Yunmeng Jiang, but only by a bit. Wei Wuxian frowned. Would Lotus Pier be okay? It was quite close to the Wen Sect.

Eventually, Lan Wangji convinced Wei Wuxian to sleep on his bed. Lan Wangji was satisfied.

Jiang Cheng arrived a bit later. As he handed over the pillows and blankets he had collected, he demanded to know where Wei Wuxian was since it had been Lan Wangji to open the door. Lan Wangji responded by slamming the door shut in Jiang Cheng’s face. Jiang Cheng’s livid shout made Lan Wangji feel smug.

For the next few days, Wei Wuxian and Lan Wangji had a routine. Wei Wuxian would stay in the Jingshi while Lan Wangji went out. Lan Wangji would always drop by to give Wei Wuxian his meals, which, surprisingly, weren’t bland. They were loaded with spice, and Wei Wuxian cheered each time he heard the Jingshi’s door open. When dinner time came, Lan Wangji would no longer leave. He would sit across from Wei Wuxian, allowing the boy to chatter despite his constant chiding. He would say to stop talking at meals, but when Wei Wuxian didn’t stop, he gave up. At night, Wei Wuxian would sleep on the floor (much to Lan Wangji’s displeasure), but a couple of arguments between them convinced Wei Wuxian to sleep in Lan Wangji’s bed. Lan Wangji had been so insistent, after all. If he was uncomfortable, it wasn’t Wei Wuxian’s fault!

It was quite domestic. Just the two of them, sharing meals in one home. Wei Wuxian never thought of Lan Wangji as anything more than a friend, but this kind of situation forced many ideas into his head, especially whenever they shared a bed and Lan Wangji would tuck his arm beneath Wei Wuxian’s neck.

Wei Wuxian wasn’t against being with a boy, and Lan Wangji was perfect. He was perfect but oh-so-oblivious to the things that he did to Wei Wuxian’s heart. Lan Wangji was probably only interested in girls anyways, and Wei Wuxian didn’t want to dishonor his friend’s—his *crush’s*—pure intentions. Eventually, Wei Wuxian’s desire for Lan Wangji’s friendship increased. It became more passionate. More greedy.

One day, while Lan Wangji was practicing his guqin after dinner, Wei Wuxian asked him, “How would you feel about kissing me?”

Lan Wangji choked. “Pardon me?”

“I mean, a lot of guys want to kiss me,” Wei Wuxian said, unaware of Lan Wangji’s growing frown, “so I was wondering if you might want to kiss me...”

“I will not take advantage of you,” Lan Wangji informed. Wei Wuxian shriveled up.

Of course Lan Wangji wouldn’t want to kiss him. Wei Wuxian had probably allowed this people wanting his hand in marriage situation to get to his head. Why would Lan Wangji want to kiss him, a son of a servant, when he himself was a young master? Lan Wangji deserved better, and Wei Wuxian was a fool to think that, maybe, Lan Wangji would want him.

“Ah,” Wei Wuxian sighed. “Of course. How silly of me... Of course you wouldn’t want to kiss me.” Wei Wuxian couldn’t stop the hurt from leaking into his voice.

“Wei Ying?”

Wei Wuxian sobbed a little. “I’m fine, Lan Zhan.” Before he knew it, his vision became blurry and wetness trailed down his cheeks. Realizing that he was crying, Wei Wuxian turned his head away, but it was too late. Lan Wangji had already abandoned his guqin to occupy Wei Wuxian’s side.

“Wei Ying?” Lan Wangji called again, reaching out to cup Wei Wuxian’s face, and it had been things like this that made Wei Wuxian *yearn*. Lan Wangji had been too good to him these last few days. He was so gentle and so kind to Wei Wuxian, and Wei Wuxian, who had never been treated this gently, eventually caved into that kindness. He was the head disciple of Yunmeng Jiang. He was a rambunctious boy, not a delicate maiden, but Wei Wuxian found that he liked how loving Lan Wangji’s touches felt. “What happened? Are you alright?”

Wei Wuxian had to wonder if Lan Wangji would be disgusted if he knew how much Wei Wuxian wanted him. “Would you hate it?” Wei Wuxian croaked, “If you k-kissed me?”

Wei Wuxian had never felt so vulnerable. He was so scared to hear Lan Wangji’s answer.

“No,” Lan Wangji said, immediately. Wei Wuxian’s eyes lit up. “I wouldn’t. Not at all.”

“Would you... Like to?” Wei Wuxian asked, suddenly feeling hopeful and bold. “Kiss me?”

“I...” Lan Wangji had also been feeling quite bold, but a part of him was scared. What if Wei Wuxian was teasing him again? However, as he looked at those silver eyes sparkling with tears, looking at Lan Wangji as though he were the only thing keeping Wei Wuxian’s world afloat, he decided that he would risk it. If Wei Wuxian was playing, Lan Wangji was willing to risk the heartbreak. “I wanted to kiss you. For a long time, but I have only begun to accept my feelings recently. Whenever I saw people covet you, I wanted to take you in my arms and call you *mine*.”

Suddenly, Wei Wuxian lunged at Lan Wangji, wrapping his arms tightly around Lan Wangji’s shoulders, practically vibrating. “Yes!” He screamed. “Yes! Yes! Yes! I like you so much, Lan Zhan.”

It was then that Lan Wangji realized that Wei Wuxian hadn't been joking around. His arms decided to rest on Wei Wuxian's waist.

Internally, he sighed, '*Ah... Slim waist.*'

Wei Wuxian pulled away, Lan Wangji's hands still wrapped around his waist. "So... Will you kiss me?"

Lan Wangji felt warmth travel to his ears. He leaned forward, pressing his face close to Wei Wuxian's. There was barely any space between the two of them, and they could feel their breaths intermingle.

From his close, Lan Wangji could admire the long lashes Wei Wuxian had, and Wei Wuxian could admire the pretty shade of gold Lan Wangji's eyes were. Lan Wangji's eyes fluttered shut, and Wei Wuxian followed suit, slowly shutting his eyes and Lan Wangji began leaning closer... and closer...

Finally, Lan Wangji *pecked* Wei Wuxian's lips.

Lan Wangji quickly pulled away once he did, internally screaming about how he had lost his first kiss. He had lost his first kiss with his crush, Wei Wuxian! Lan Wangji was just so happy. He scanned Wei Wuxian's face and admired how his face flushed a pretty red. Wei Wuxian looked so out of it, his eyes a bit unfocused.

"That was my first kiss, Lan Zhan!" Wei Wuxian chirped. He leaned into Lan Wangji's shoulder. Lan Wangji fought back the smile trying to spread across his face, ultimately losing.

"Mn," Lan Wangji replied. "Mine too."

"So," Wei Wuxian whispered, as though he were sharing a secret, "are you my lover now?"

"Mn," Lan Wangji immediately replied, taking Wei Wuxian's hand into his own and placing a kiss on it. "Wei Ying is mine."

Unlike Lan Wangji, Wei Wuxian had a large, dopey smile on his face, practically splitting his face in half. From where he sat right next to Lan Wangji, he was dancing, hair swishing around as he did. "We're a couple!" He sang. Suddenly, he gasped. "Oh no, Lan Zhan! How will your uncle react? He doesn't like me?"

"I will tell him. He will like you," Lan Wangji declared.

"You can't force your uncle to like me."

"Does not know Wei Ying well yet."

"I don't think he'll like me even once he does," Wei Wuxian pouted.

Lan Wangji shook his head. "He *will*," he declared, as though Lan Qiren would truly have no other choice but to like Wei Wuxian. "Wei Ying is amazing. You are... beautiful... smart..."

and... and I like you..." Lan Wangji said, his ears turning more and more red with every passing moment. Wei Wuxian stared at them in awe, wondering how he had never noticed.

Wei Wuxian extended a hand to those ears and petted them, feeling how hot they were beneath his fingers. At Wei Wuxian's actions, Lan Wangji's ear got noticeably hotter.

"How cute," Wei Wuxian whispered in awe.

Lan Wangji couldn't take it. "We will sleep early."

"Eh? But isn't it *too* early?" Wei Wuxian asked. Lan Wangji promptly ignored him, pushing Wei Wuxian into the bed and covering the both of them with Lan Wangji's blanket. Wei Wuxian sighed, "Okay then, Lan Zhan," then flicked his wrist so that the candles of the Jingshi were blown out.

When Lan Qiren returned, he told all of the students and all of the teachers to prepare for departure. When asked why, Lan Qiren explained that they would be going to Yiling, which made people question his intentions even more.

Eventually, Lan Qiren gave in. "The majority of the Wen Sect is *dead*," he said. At the news, people panicked. They demanded for more answers, wanting to know what had caused the Wen Sect's demise. They had to know if their sects would be in danger or not. Lan Qiren was solemn when he informed the students and teachers about the condition of the Wen Sect. "It had reeked of resentful energy. Corpses laid everywhere in the courtyard. We had never seen anything like this."

Then, they asked why they would be travelling to the Burial Mounds. Lan Qiren sighed, "There was something that we had not informed you as we hadn't thought of it as important. When the Wen Sect disappeared, the Worldly map showed that a new party had been formed." Lan Qiren paused, allowing the information to sink in. A new party? A new sect? "There was no information about this new party other than the fact that it had been named 'Wei' and that they are currently located in Yiling."

Lan Qiren scanned the crowd to look for the boy who shared the same surname as the new party but found that he was nowhere to be seen. Considering how much chaos was occurring at the moment, Lan Qiren was surprised that Wei Wuxian wasn't there. Usually, the boy was found amidst chaos. "Where is Wei Wuxian?" When no one answered, he asked again. "Where is Wei Wuxian?"

The crowd fell silent. A small voice spoke out, "We haven't seen him walking around since you left..."

Lan Qiren quirked an eyebrow at that. "He hasn't been troubling anyone?"

Even the teachers shook their heads. "No," one of them admitted. "That boy hasn't been coming out since you left."

"Why?"

The teacher looked at the students, many of whom had shrunk under their accusing looks.

“We,” another small voice squeaked before immediately being hushed. Lan Qiren stood in the midst of silence for a while.

“Well. Go on,” Lan Qiren encouraged, morbidly curious. “What had happened to that troublemaker?”

The silence stretched before one of the teachers sighed. “Grandmaster, these students have been harassing Wei Wuxian.”

“And you did nothing,” Lan Qiren accused.

“We tried, but they were too *persistent*.” The disciples shrunk back. “For several days and nights, they would continuously trespass into Wei Wuxian’s room and attempt to do some,” the teacher shut their eyes and sighed deeply, “*unsavory* activities. We cannot even recall all of the times Lan Wangji had to punish them with the discipline paddle.”

“Wangji did?”

“He had volunteered to do so himself. We rarely see him not holding onto it as of late.”

Lan Qiren grimaced. Lan Wangji was a young master. A discipline paddle doesn’t suit him, but Lan Qiren knew that his nephew could be stubborn if he truly wanted to do something. “So you’re telling me that Wei Wuxian had disappeared?”

The teacher sighed. “Not truly.” The disciples’ heads perked up at that because they had believed that Wei Wuxian had abandoned them, tired of their insistent attention. The teacher glared at them, giving them a look that scolded them without words. *You should be ashamed of yourselves* that look seemed to say. “The truth is that Wei Wuxian had been staying at the Jingshi for the time being.”

Lan Qiren choked. “And you allowed him,” he almost shrieked. He felt like he was going to faint. Wei Wuxian, at his nephew’s home. His poor nephew, but Lan Qiren was proud that Lan Wangji was willing to sacrifice his sanity to help Wei Wuxian. “Inform them both that we will be departing soon to investigate.”

Jiang Cheng bowed. “I will tell them, Teacher Lan.”

“You know where the Jingshi is despite being a guest disciple?”

Jiang Cheng sighed. “Unfortunately, there had been something that had been brought to my attention about your nephew. That information had caused me to visit Second Young Master Lan’s room in numerous instances.”

Lan Qiren nodded, suspicious. “Then... I will allow you to go, I suppose.”

Jiang Cheng left and Lan Qiren dismissed all of the disciples. When they returned, they had their swords, food, and some spare clothes prepared for the journey. Lan Wangji appeared with Wei Wuxian, and they were immediately crowded by Wei Wuxian’s friends.

“Wei-xiong,” Nie Huaisang weeped. “I missed you! These barbarians know nothing of art!”

A couple of their friends protested, which Wei Wuxian only laughed at.

It took a few days to travel to Yiling, but when they finally arrived, the first thing that they noticed was the lack of resentful energy. Yiling was renowned for being a town full of resentful energy and fierce corpses, yet the resentful energy there seemed almost tamed. It had surprised some of the individuals there, but that had only confirmed that there was *something* there. From their observations, that something probably had power over resentful energy.

Resentful energy was dangerous. It harmed people and affected their mood, making it hard to think. That’s why people had avoided Yiling. Condensed amounts of resentful energy could even kill a man, and rather painfully too. If something could control resentful energy, then it would be a danger to the world. Some of the weaker individuals in Yiling had died due to the condensed resentment, and they had transformed into fierce corpses from the sheer agony that they had experienced before their deaths.

They walked into Yiling, and vendors greeted them at every turn, unused to seeing so many cultivators at once, and the group had been surprised when they found other sects in Yiling too. The Jiang Sect, Nie Sect, and Jin Sect were all there accompanied with some lesser sects, all of them had come to investigate what had happened to the Wen Sect.

For a while, they walked around Yiling, interrogating the citizens but only finding a few leads. Apparently, new faces began appearing in Yiling. Many of those faces belonged to elderly people, and a couple of those faces belonged to youths. They had been a large crowd, and the people of Yiling had been flabbergasted when they first arrived.

Though they would occasionally catch glimpses of those faces, those mysterious individuals would seemingly disappear. The people of Yiling didn’t know where all of those people lived because there was no news of people moving in or anyone selling houses, and definitely not enough houses to house that many people.

The cultivation world was flabbergasted.

Wei Wuxian and Lan Wangji were interrogating a vendor together when Lan Wangji suddenly felt a heavy weight on his leg. He looked down and saw large eyes staring up at him.

“Rich-gege!” The child cried in excitement, jumping up and down Lan Wangji’s leg. “You look like Rich-gege!”

Wei Wuxian bursted out in laughter. “Goodness, Lan Zhan. Your wealth is so obvious, even to children!” Wei Wuxian picked up the adorable child and cooed at him. The child gasped when he got a closer look at Wei Wuxian's face. Small fingers promptly cupped Wei Wuxian’s face. “And you look like Xian-gege!”

The boy was absolutely adorable! His cheeks were so chubby that Wei Wuxian was tempted to pinch them until they turned red, but he was surprised by how similar the nickname had

been to his own. “Your Xian-gege?” Wei Wuxian asked, still cooing over how round the boy’s eyes were.

The boy nodded vigorously.

“A-Yuan,” a familiar voice called, but Lan Wangji and Wei Wuxian weren’t quite sure as to why it had sounded familiar. “A-Yuan? Where are you?”

The boy perked up. “Here, Xian-gege!”

A black figure emerged from the crowd, and Lan Wangji and Wei Wuxian were suddenly met with a wide-eyed Yiling Patriarch.

“Shit,” the man hissed, and promptly took the giggling child. Shocked, Wei Wuxian and Lan Wangji barely reacted when the Yiling Patriarch stole the boy right from Wei Wuxian’s arms and disappeared into the crowd.

Wei Wuxian sputtered. “Hey!” He turned towards Lan Wangji, “Lan Zhan, we have to follow him.”

Lan Wangji nodded, and they took off.

Chapter End Notes

Hey! Let's talk on [Twitter](#)!

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